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POLITICS AND RELIGION IN LATE ANTIQUITY: THE ROMAN IMPERIAL *ADVENTUS CEREMONY* AND THE CHRISTIAN MYTH OF THE HARROWING OF HELL

Though it has been known intuitively for many decades, recent studies on the *Evangelium Nicodemi* have proven that this literary achievement has been one of the most influential and enduring of all the vast body of Christian apocrypha.[1] Explanations for this appeal and longevity, however couched in the metaphors of Jungian analysis, as with Alan Watts,[2] or established as universal mythology as in Joseph Campbell,[3] or as popular religion and theology as recently studied by Rémi Gounelle,[4] all of these explanations agree that the apocryphal gospel exerts a powerful attraction on the human spirit. The following discussion will argue that this attraction can be explained in part because of a resonance between significant features in this work and the most profound aspects of Late Antiquity; put simply, the Evangelium drew its symbolic structure from the most significant components of its cultural environment, and in turn it contributed a new imaginative universe. Specifically, I propose that an obsessive focus on civic liberty, justice, clemency, and vindication, all articulated in the energetic displays of Roman Imperial oratory and iconography from the second to the fourth centuries, so captured the popular

1. See especially Zbigniew Izydorczyk, ed., *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus: texts, intertexts, and contexts in Western Europe* (Tempe, Arizona: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997).
2. In particular *Myth and Ritual in Christianity* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1953), pp. 166-69.
3. Beginning, naturally, with *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Bollingen series, 17 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949).
4. Rémi Gounelle, "La descente du Christ aux enfers. Institutionnalisation d'une croyance" (Paris: Institut d'études augustiennes, 2000).

imagination that they became habits of exegesis; in time, popular Christianity adopted this perspective, and the resultant assumption of the secular led, in consequence, to a new, transfigured, salvific vision.

In many ways the central and defining episode of the *Evangelium Nicodemi* as it was received in the Middle Ages is the account of Christ's descent into hell, in fact a cycle of descent and return, of *kata-* and *anabasis*: following his death, Christ approaches hell, defeats Satan, liberates the Jewish Patriarchs and Prophets wrongly imprisoned there, and returns to paradise with the retinue, "leading captivity captive" (Ephesians 4:8, quoting Psalm 68:18). As Gounelle and others have demonstrated, this heroic conception of the descent was only one of many elaborated throughout the patristic period: it should be noted that "descent" is a more generalized concept, and might involve a large number of other, collateral themes.[5] Luckily, the English language retains a more precise phrase for the specific embodiment of the descent under discussion here: the Harrowing of Hell. The word "harrow" arises out of the Old English infinitive *hergian*, Middle English *herian, harian, harwen*, meaning to raid; it signifies, more exactly, a predatory attack, etymologically related to the modern verb "to harry," as in "harrying the coastline."[6] Moreover, though the word does not necessarily denote a purpose of rescue, the concept is closely allied. Thus the fifteenth-century English translation of the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* has, for the Latin couplet "Ad istum infernum Christus descendit et intravit/ Et omnes, qui in ipso erant, potenter inde liberavit" this close rendering: "This helle entered Jhu / oure Saueoure descending doune right/ / And of alle salves there inne/ he heryde it be his grete myght."[7]

Although the Harrowing of Hell legend is best known to us today through its presence in the *Evangelium Nicodemi*, it may have derived separately. The first and major part of the *Evangelium*, usually termed the *Acta* or *Gesta Pilati*, survives in a Latin

5. See Gounelle, "La descente du Christ aux enfers," especially "Chapitre III: La descente du Christ aux enfers, partie intégrante du kérygme de l'Église," pp. 107-139.
6. Hans Kurath, Sherman Kuhn, and John Reidy, *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1956-), H, 689-90.
7. *Speculum*, ed. J. Lutz and P. Perdrizet (Leipzig: Ernest Meininger, 1907-09), I, 58; *The Mirroure of Mans Saluacionne* (privately printed for the Roxburghe Club, 1888), p. 100.

palimpsest of the fifth century, with no hint of a Harrowing narrative; and indeed all of the surviving Middle Eastern and the oldest Greek version of the *Acta* do not contain a descent section. By the ninth century, the time of the next surviving Latin manuscript, however, the Harrowing is firmly attached, and it remained attached thenceforward.[8] The resulting hybrid version of the passion and resurrection of Christ became one of the most popular works in the Middle Ages, as Zbigniew Izydorczyk's census of 424 surviving (and twelve lost) Latin manuscripts proves.[9] The Harrowing narrative attached to these *Evangelium Nicodemi* manuscripts is therefore, in the manuscript tradition, relatively late; but, in spite of its ninth-century attestation, there is a very strong tendency to place it earlier, perhaps in the mid-sixth century.[10] Fortunately, there are other sources for the Harrowing, mostly in sermon collections, which indicate a full development of the myth in Late Antiquity, and indeed five of these sermons contain sections nearly identical to the narrative found in the *Evangelium Nicodemi*. For a typical indication of an early date for these sermons, one uses, with a positive connotation, the Roman technical term *exactor*—"tax collector" for Christ. Peter Brown has described this office as resultant specifically from fourth- and fifth-century official fiscal policy; it would not be comprehensible outside of that context.[11] Before we examine the evidence of correlation between

8. See Izydorczyk, *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus*, pp. 43-54, for a summary of the possible interrelationship between these narratives. The text of the apocryphon is available in H.C. Kim's edition of the tenth-century Codex Einsidlensis 326 (*The Gospel of Nicodemus* [Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1973]).

9. For a discussion of the manuscript tradition, see Zbigniew Izydorczyk, "The Unfamiliar *Evangelium Nicodemi*," *Manuscripta* 33 (1989), 172-8, and *Manuscripts of the* Evangelium Nicodemi: *A Census* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies), 1993. This large number of manuscripts can be increased significantly by adding vernacular translations, a fascinating English example of which is Huntington Manuscript 144, crudely written, perhaps by a middle-class owner. See Consuelo Wager Dutschke's *Guide to the Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1989), p. 198.

10. For a summary of some of the most compelling arguments, see Rémi Gounelle and Zbigniew Izydorczyk's Introduction in *L'Evangile de Nicodème, ou* Les Actes fais sous Ponce Pilate *(recension latine A), suive de La* Lettre de Pilate à l'empereur Claude (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), pp. 114-7.

11. The term *exactor* appears in the collection of homilies associated with a certain Eusebius "Gallicanus," for which see below, in *Sermo XII* 2.15. Brown defines *exactor* as "the person responsible for the collection of

Roman culture and the Harrowing in detail, however, there are some background issues to consider.

The Christian Context by the Second Century

The apocalyptic focus of early Christianity on the imminent return of Christ is obvious in even a superficial reading of Scripture; almost simultaneously, Christ's nativity began to be described as a prefiguration of that return, establishing in time what was to end time. As early as the second century, Christian culture had begun to visualize a third coming of Christ, occurring between his appearance on earth at his nativity, and his return from heaven at the end of time: after his death and before his resurrection, the newly-glorified Christ manifested his power first in the abode of the dead, overcoming the allegorized figure of Death itself, and, after this, in heaven, through the Ascension. This development, already anticipated in Philippians 2:9-11, served as a cosmic analog, encompassing depths and heights, to the established temporal sequence, which had already subsumed a universal beginning and end.

Bishop Melito of Sardis, who died around the year 190, preached a Pascal homily that illustrates the cosmic theme in its early stages of development; while it is in part a historical accident that this testimony, like other testimonies of the harrowing myth, should find expression in sermon form, it can fairly be said that the genre is more indicative of popular attitudes in this period toward Christ's descent into hell. After describing the crucifixion, Melito depicts the resurrection in these heroic terms:

> He rose up from the dead, and cried aloud with this voice: Who is he that contends with me? Let him stand in opposition to me. I set the condemned man free; I gave the dead man life; I raised up the one who had been entombed. Who is my opponent? I, says he, am the Christ. I am the one who destroyed death, and triumphed over the enemy, and trampled Hades under foot, and bound the strong one, and carried off man to the heights of heaven, I, he says, am the Christ.[12]

arrears, usually . . . a senior member of the town council" (*Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* [Madison: The Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1992], p. 28).

12. Translated by Gerald Hawthorne, in "A New English Translation of Melito's Pascal Homily," in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), p. 173.

The vivid image is that of the classical monarch, listing his accomplishments and hurling challenges at the enemy. In this context, moreover, the term "triumph" is to be taken literally. As Otto Perler writes, "Melito compares his Christ with a triumphant king. (This was a favorite subject of triumphal art [triumphal arches and diptychs].) The term is a technical expression signifying the conducting of a captive in a triumphal procession."[13] Melito, moreover, represents one of the first Christian preachers to adopt the ornate oratorical techniques of Greek Rhetoricians, and George Kennedy proposes that this homily "is characterized by a flamboyant literary style reminiscent of the sophist Gorgias."[14] In contrast to earlier, more constrained oratorical approaches, Melito exploits the thematic implications of his subject with theatrical exaggeration. One of the most important uses of this dramatic style would be the epideitic, the praise of great public figures.

This "third coming" of Christ, then, shares characteristics with the other two comings, but has an explicit imaginative dimension in terms of conquest. To choose two illustrative details, the binding of the "strong one" seems clearly based on an anticipation of Revelation 20:2, so that the Satan bound in the future already experiences a foretaste of it in time; on the other hand, trampling of Hades underfoot is just as much a reference to the symbolic *calcatio colli*, the dramatic pose of a conqueror placing his foot on the neck of his enemy, as it may be a biblical allusion.[15] It is easy to imagine that this presentation was given before a congregation who anticipated the depiction of Christ as conquering hero with excitement; certainly they were fully convinced of the combative nature of the descent, and were eager to hear the theme exploited fully.

This is not to say that literary treatments of the other two comings of Christ had not been extensively influenced by prevalent political custom. Historians of religion have for some time recog-

13. "Méliton compare son Christ à un roi triomphateur. (C'était un sujet favori de l'art triomphal (arcs de triomphe, diptyques).) Le terme est une expression technique signifiant conduire un captif dans le cortège triomphal." In O. Perler's edition of Melito, *Sur la Pâque et Fragments*, Sources Chrétiennes 123 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1966), p. 201.

14. *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 2nd. ed. (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 156.

15. See Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1986), pp. 57-58 and note 76.

nized that Hellenistic concepts of divine and royal immanence, the *epiphaneia* and *parousia*, profoundly affected early Christian thought, specifically in depicting Christ's work as redeemer.[16] Briefly, the ritualized apparition of the god brought health to the *polis*; in a transference which must precede Greece by millennia the ruler, himself a realization of the god, ceremonially enters the city in his own manifestation, and is greeted with acclamations naming him *soter*: he who saves. The Gospel of Matthew in particular defines Christ's two appearances, in time and beyond it, as "epiphanies," manifestations of mercy to the just and judgment to the rebellious. And, as has been demonstrated for the last seventy years, the inter-relationship of Hellenistic ideas of kingship and Christian soteriology continued for many centuries in the writings of Eastern theologians.[17] The West followed a similar path, determined in large measure by the gradual adaptation of the Roman ceremonies of *adventus* and *adoratio*, an adaptation that extended from the Principate through to the Dominate and into the early Middle Ages.[18] Aristotle states at the outset of the *Posterior Analytics* that all learning proceeds from the known to the unknown; it may well be that the ineffable notion of deific manifestation could only be understood in terms of manifestations that were both familiar and, in their literary embodiment, divine.

The *Adventus* Ceremony in the Principate and Interregnum

From the time of Augustus, Roman imperial policy had been gradually transforming the Hellenistic concept of royal epiphany according to its own interests, interests that were both juridical and territorial. The resultant *adventus* became one of the chief means of effecting that best of all Roman ideals, the stability of the commonwealth.[19] The earliest embodiment might be said to reach its

16. See G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961), pp. 538-9 and 1043-4.
17. E.R. Goodenough, "The Political Philosophy of Hellenistic Kingship," *Yale Classical Studies* 1 (1928), 55-102.
18. For the broad, parallel use of *adventus* among Christian authors, see Albert Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens* (Strasbourg: Le latin chrétien, 1954), 61-2.
19. For a succinct discussion of the *adventus*, see Brown's *Power and Persuasion*, pp. 13-14. A longer description may be found in Sabine MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1981), pp. 17-89. The full definition appears in *Thesaurus linguae latinae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1900), 1, 837-40.

fullest development under Hadrian, when Roman propagandists completed their transformation of the royal entry in two basic, complementary aspects: the entry itself, the *adventus*, symbolizing the emperor's universal authority; and, symbolizing his benevolence and clemency, the restoration of the city or province to its previous grandeur. The iconography for these can be seen on a number of coins in various series struck well into the fourth century. In the first, the emperor demonstrates his piety, performing a sacrifice as a personification of the province watches; in the second, the emperor approaches on foot, hand extended in a gesture of concern toward the personification, who, reclining, raises an arm in supplication.[20] It is important to note that both issues depict the emperor motivated by his majesty, rather than by the specific rights (or merits) of the unfortunate people.

The language appropriate to this encounter can be discovered in the *prosphonetikoi*, the set speeches made on occasions of welcome. An illustrative example is Pliny the Younger's *Panegyricus*, written as an address to the Emperor Trajan depicting his entry into Rome in 99:

> Now first of all, think of the day when you entered your city, so long awaited and so much desired [*expectatus desideratusque*]! The very method of your entry won delight and surprise, for your predecessors chose to be borne, or carried in, not satisfied even to be drawn by four white horses in a triumphal carriage, but lifted up on human shoulders in their overbearing pride. You towered above us only because of your own splendid physique; your triumph did not rest on humiliation, won as it was over imperial arrogance.... Even the sick disregarded their doctors' orders and dragged themselves out for a glimpse of you, as if this could restore their health. All felt the same joy at your coming [*adventu*], when you were coming [*venisti*] to be the same for all, joy which could still grow as you moved forward, and (one might say) swell with every step.[21]

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20. See especially the *adventus* series of Hadrian in H. Mattingly and E.A. Sydenham, *Roman Imperial Coinage* (London: Spink, 1923-81), 2.

21. 22, 1-5, trans. Betty Radice, Loeb series (London: Heinemann, 1969), 2, 371; "Ac primum qui dies ille, quo expectatus desideratusque urbem tuam ingressus es! Iam hoc ipsum, quod ingressus es, quam mirum laetumque! Nam priores inuehi et importari solebant, non dico quadriiugo curru et albentibus equis sed umeris hominum, quod adrogantius erat. Tu sola corporis proceritate elatior aliis et excelsior, non de patientia nostra

According to George Kennedy, Pliny's panegyric continues both the practice and perspective of earlier set speeches; it is, however, remarkable in its seriousness of purpose, and it was unusually influential because of Pliny's high reputation and its masterful language.[22] Regarding its purpose, Pliny wrote that "the virtues of the emperor be reinforced by sincere praise of them and secondly that future emperors be admonished, not as by a teacher, but in the form of example, by what road they best might attain the same glory" (*Ep.* 3.18.1-2).[23] The dual objective of praising the Emperor's virtues and correcting future rulers is fully realized in the entire, lengthy text of the *Panegyricus*, but a sense of it can be recovered here. The Emperor's republican, civic piety is clear in the circumstances of the ceremony: the *adventus* itself is closely juxtaposed to the root verb, as if to emphasize the Emperor's gracious (and, by implication, personal) participation in the event; the *expectatus/desideratusque* internal rhyme certainly emphasizes the generally hopeful condition of the populace. Trajan's humility is fully characterized in contrast to the usual custom of entry: in his unadorned physical presence he overcomes the pretensions of nameless predecessors. As to admonishing any future emperors, the second aspect to his purpose, Pliny in this way raises the specters of inadequate rulers, if only obliquely, as testimonies to Trajan's superiority. According to Sabine MacCormack, such subdued criticism of predecessors fits precisely in Menander Rhetor's advice on panegyrics, in which the speaker is specifically enjoined not to disparage the past: "If [the subjects] have fared ill under the preceding ruler, you give examples and elaborate their misfortunes, while not, however, speaking any ill of the preceding ruler, but you simply speak about the misfortunes of the subjects."[24] As we will see, panegyrists will begin to ignore this rule later in the history of the empire, when misrule takes on the coloring of public betrayal.

quendam triumphum, sed de superbia principum egisti. . . . aegri quoque neglecto medentium imperio ad conspectum tui quasi ad salutem sanitatemque prorepere. . . . Tam aequalis ab omnibus ex aduentu tuo laetitia percepta est, quam omnibus uenisti; quae tamen ipsa cum ingressu tuo creuit, ac prope in singulos gradus aucta est," in *XII panegyrici Latini*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), 17-8.

22. *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World. 300 B.C.-300 A.D.* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 543-46.

23. Translation quoted in Kennedy, p. 544.

24. *Peri epideiktikon*, 378, 16-23. Translated in MacCormack, p. 20.

Pliny takes his purpose further, however. In using "venisti" and "expectatus," he is relying on his audience's familiarity with line 687 of the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, addressed to Aeneas upon his entry into the underworld: "Venisti tandem, tuaque expectata parenti/Vicit iter durum pietas."[25] Just as Aeneas' coming to Hades was salutary to his honored father, Trajan's entry was presumed to restore health simply in the glimpsing of it, an assertion Pliny is happy to report without crediting it. The notion that an imperial *adventus* would bring—or more accurately restore—health is not entirely hyperbolic: on their entries, emperors often returned privileges to cities and provinces, and abolished burdensome tax levies. It was not a great step from such public *salus*—the basis of *salvator*—to bodily health; the appropriately expectant condition and turbulent excitement of the crowds is, under these circumstances, entirely natural. In this highly charged series of allusions, then, Pliny presents the emperor in majesty and glory, while stressing his native humility through his own characteristic protestations of unworthiness. The Roman *salvator* has not migrated very far from the Hellenistic *soter*, but it has been complemented with a continued emphasis on *pietas* and the other Roman virtues. Kennedy suggests that the oration may have actually affected Trajan for the good, contributing to his benign and rational rule; even if this were not so, the *Panegyricus* successfully defined the genre and its underlying code of virtuous behavior for many centuries.

As MacCormack indicates, this dual emphasis in the imperial *adventus* both remains constant and, on occasion, requires reinvention with a broader, more universalistic scope. This scope, in turn, begins to blur the arriving emperor's complementary roles as ruler and restorer. For example, Emperor Gallienus (253-268)

25. The association between Anchises' greeting and savior emperors had a long life; for one unfortunately poorly documented study, see Pierre Dufraigne, *Adventus Augusti, adventus Christi: recherche sur l'exploitation idéologique et littéraire d'un cérémonial dans l'antiquité tardive* (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1994); Dufraigne defines the "Expectate veni" as a "formule qui annonce l'épiphanie d'un dieu, et qui suppose une divinisation ou tout au moins une surhumanisation plus caractérisée du souverain" (pp. 53-4). And sometimes there is a surprising association: in 288 Carausius, a usurper in Britain, issued coins with a reverse depicting a grateful *genius Britanniae* welcoming him, and containing the optimistic inscription, "EXPECTATE VENI" (*R.I.C.* 5.2.510, nos. 554ff). For a discussion and photograph of the issue, see Peter Salway, *The Oxford History of Roman Britain* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 205-6.

issued coins naming him *Restitutor orbis*, in a direct contrast to Hadrian's issues of the previous century that celebrate him as *Restitutor Africae* and *Restitutor Achaiae* in honor of that emperor's *adventus* through the provinces. According to the *Scriptores historiae Augustae*, Probus (276-282) is greeted by the senate with this scarcely bounded enthusiasm :

> Probus Augustus, may the gods keep you ! Long since worthy, brave and just, a good leader, a good commander, an example in warfare, an example in command. May the gods keep you ! Deliverer of the commonwealth, may you be happy in your rule, master in warfare, may you be happy in rule ! May the gods guard you and yours ! Even before this the Senate chose you. In years inferior to Tacitus, in all else superior. For having accepted the imperial power we give you our thanks. Protect us, protect the commonwealth. Rightly do we entrust to your keeping those whom you formerly served. You are Francicus, you are Gothicus, you are Sarmaticus, you are Parthicus, you are everything. In former years, too, you were ever worthy of command, worth of triumphs. Happily may you live, happily may you rule.[26]

This formalized greeting is fascinating in its practical unconcern for fact ; the senate politely ignores the unfortunate circumstances of the death of Tacitus in order to make the most of Probus' legitimacy. The senators especially celebrate his ability to save the commonwealth, to protect it, and to conquer not only the Franks, the Goths, the Sarmaticans, and the Parthians, but apparently the remainder of the world.

Michael McCormick's study of Roman and post-Roman military attitudes, *Eternal Victory*, charts the further expansion of such acclamations from the Principate on. Not only were heroic emperors praised in more exaggerated ways, but putative enemies were

26. Probus, XI, 6-12. Trans. David Magie, Loeb series (London : Heinemann, 1921), 358 ; "Probe August, di te servent. Olim dignus et fortis et iustus, bonus ductor, bonus imperator, exemplum militiae, exemplum imperii. Di te servent. Adsertor rei publicae felix imperes magister militiae felix imperes, te cum tuis di custodiant. Et senatus antea te delegit. Aetate Tacito posterior, ceteris prior, quod imperium suscepisti gratias agimus. Tuere nos, tuere rem publicam. Bene tibi committimus quos ante servasti. Tu Francicus, tu Gothicus, tu Sarmaticus, tu Parthicus, tu omnia. Et prius fuisti semper dignus imperio, dignis triumphis. Felix agas, feliciter imperes," in *Scriptores historiae Augustae*, ed. Ernst Hohl, (Leipzig : Teubner, 1965), II.

attacked more savagely. The third century, McCormick shows, generated broader and broader titles of invective regarding Rome's enemies, and on occasion these enemies encompassed rivals—seated emperors included—to the throne.[27] According to the *Scriptores*, when in 238 Gordian I and Gordian II were proclaimed in Africa against the Emperor Maximinus (235-238), the consul at Rome simultaneously forestalled Maximinus' party and prepared the senate for its welcoming acclamations with the following words:

> "Conscript Fathers, the two Gordians . . . have freed us from that savage monster, from that wild beast. Why do you hear me with quaking? Why do you look around? Why do you delay? This is what you have always hoped for. Maximinus is our enemy; the gods shall bring it to pass that he may now cease to be. . . ."

The consul has cleverly reminded the senate of its new responsibilities, now that it has been liberated from a manifest tyrant, and he encourages them to declare themselves loyal to the Gordians. He was sufficiently persuasive, according to the narrative, for the Senate to oblige with an acclamation, apparently spontaneously: "We thank you, O gods. We are freed from our enemies; so may we be wholly freed! We adjudge Maximinus an enemy. We consign Maximinus and his son to the gods below. We call the Gordians Augusti. . . ."[28] The concept of vindication from a despotic enemy continues themes found in Menander and Pliny; the astute advice not to make too much of a previous ruler's failings seems, however, to be quite forgotten.

Naturally, if the enemy were barbarians, no delicacy of feelings need be expressed: in the official descriptions of victories over the Parthians or the Germans, for example, the emphasis centered on the prostrate figures of their leaders, the vast numbers of captives taken, the even greater numbers of slain, the Romans and Roman cities rescued, and the Roman spoils returned, in addition to the accumulated enemy spoils. The impression to be conveyed was

27. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 21-24.

28. In *Scriptores historiae Augustae*, The Three Gordians. XI, 4, 6-7, 9. Magie trans., 2, 401. "'Patres conscripti, Gordiani duo . . . ab inmani nos belua, ab illa fera vindicaverent. Quid timide auditis? Quid circumspicitis? Quid cunctamini? Hoc est quod semper optastis. Hostis est Maximinus; di facient ut esse iam desinat. . . .'" "'Di vobis gratias. Liberati ab hostibus sumus, sic penitus liberemur. Maximinus cum filio dis inferis devovemus. Gordianos Augustos appellamus'" (Hohl ed., II).

that Roman arms were irresistible, and that the enemy had been completely annihilated: throughout, there is an explicit notion of absolute victory, for which the gods were to be thanked. For example, this is *Scriptores* version of the dispatch of Probus to the Senate following his Rhine campaign:

> "Conscript Fathers, to the immortal gods that they have confirmed your judgment of me. For all of Germany, throughout its whole extent, has now been subdued, and nine kings of different tribes have lain suppliant and prostrate at my feet, or should I say at yours. Now all the barbarians plow for you, plant for you, and serve against the more distant tribes. Therefore do you, in accord with your custom, decree thanksgivings. For four hundred thousand of our foes have been slain, sixteen thousand armed men are at our disposal, seventy most famous cities have been rescued, and all the Gallic provinces have been made entirely free [*liberatae*]. The crowns of gold which all the communes of Gaul have bestowed upon me I have dedicated to your clemency, Conscript Fathers. Do you, with your hands, now consecrate them to Jupiter Best and Greatest and to the other immortal gods and goddesses. All booty has been regained, other booty too has been captured, greater, indeed, than that which was previously taken."[29]

What is most striking about passages such as these is the victor's adherence to formulas of devotion to the gods and loyalty to the senate, while leaving no doubt as to the true source of the empire's success: in this case, none other than Probus. The prostrate German kings, in an official attitude of *adoratio/proskynesis*, fall before Probus, who then transfers the gesture to the honor of the senate. And the reference to "coronas aureas," for example, almost certainly relates to mural crowns (though Vegetius identifies a num-

29. In *Scriptores historiae Augustae*, Probus XV, 1-5. Magie trans., 3, 367. "'Ago dis inmortalibus gratias, patres conscripti, quia vestra in me iudicia comprobarunt. Subacta est omnis qua tenditur late Germania, novem reges gentium diversarum ad meos pedes, immo ad vestros, supplices statique iacuerunt. Omnes iam barbari vobis arant, vobis iam serunt et contra interiores gentes militant. Supplicationes igitur vestro more decernite. Nam et quadrigenta milia hostium caesa sunt, et sedecim milia armatorum nobis oblata, et septuaginta urbes nobilissimae a captivitate hostium vindicatae, et omnes penitus Galliae liberatae. Coronas, quas mihi obtulerunt omnes Galliae civitates aureas, vestrae, patres conscripti clementiae dedicavi. Eas Iovi Optimo Maximo ceterisque dis deabusque immortalibus vestris manibus consecrate. Praeda omnis recepta est, capta etiam alia, et quidem maior quam fuerat ante direpta'" (Hohl ed., II).

ber of others):[30] these were awarded to the first soldier who successfully scaled a city wall. Even with the measure of hyperbole in this address, there is a fairly consistent continuity of almost three hundred years in attitudes regarding the salvation of the state, and even as attitudes begin to change radically under the Tetrarchs, many of the elements of imperial piety and legitimate rule on one side, and his clemency on the other, remain and still inform the cultural imagination.

The Dominate and Beyond

It is with a deliberate purpose that the Tetrarchy (and their enemies) begins to define the *adventus* in a more transcendent context.[31] While there is no room here to elaborate fully on the transformation of the Empire that reached a culmination with the Tetrarchs and subsequently, it is sufficient to say that the concept of imperial salvation took on explicitly sacred dimensions, while consciously attempting to retain Republican virtues.[32] The *adventus* of the individual Tetrarch is presented as a divine reconciliation of his proper *pietas*, and it is without embarrassment that each is called a *deus praesens*. The union of the four rulers' independent wills was depicted as an almost mystical symbol of the unity of the empire, an empire no longer founded on simple devotion to the gods, but on their emperors' divine calling. There is a witness in this celebratory description of Constantius' entry into the city of London, formerly held by the rebel Allectus, in 297:

> "As soon as you approached that shore as the long-desired avenger and liberator, a triumphal crowd poured forth to meet Your Majesty, and Britons exultant with joy came forward with

30. On the various types of military crowns, see Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *De re militari*, III, 5.

31. The following is heavily dependent on MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 22-33.

32. See, inter alia, Robert Etienne, *Le culte impérial dans la péninsule ibérique d'Auguste à Dioclétien*, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 191 (Paris: E. De Boccard, 1958); Duncan Fishwick, "The Imperial *Numen* in Roman Britain," *Journal of Roman Studies* 59 (1969), 76-91; Hans Peter L'Orange, *Art Forms and Civic Life in the Late Roman Empire*, trans. Dr. and Mrs. Knut Berg (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 126-129; and Fritz Taeger, "Zur Geschichte der spätkaiserzeitlichen Herrscherauffassung," *Saeculum* 7 (1956), 182-95; Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), p. 141.

> their wives and children, venerating not you alone, whom they gazed at as one who had descended from heaven, but even the sails and oars of that ship which had conveyed your divinity and prepared to feel your weight upon their prostrate bodies as you disembarked. Nor is it any wonder if they were carried away by such joy after so many years of miserable captivity; after the violation of their wives, after the shameful enslavement of their children, they were free at last, at last Romans, at last restored to life by the true light of empire. Certainly indeed, quite apart from that reputation of yours for clemency and piety which is celebrated by the common voice of nations, they saw the stamp of every virtue on your face, O Caesar; on your brow, dignity; in your eyes, gentleness; in your blush, modesty; in your speech, justice."[33]

Some elements are familiar enough: the combined notion of authority and generosity, the triumphal procession, the *adoratio/proskynesis*; but others are noticeably different: the emphasis on a cosmic origin, the aspect of veneration, the concept of re-creation *vera luce imperii*. The Arras medallion, commemorating the event, contains the telling inscription, "REDDITOR LUCIS AETERNAE."[34] And, while due acknowledgement is made to Constantius' time-honored virtues of clemency and loyalty, he has surpassed even that noble tradition by shining forth in his features all of the virtues.[35] It is difficult to imagine such sentiments arising in Pliny.

33. "Merito igitur statim atque ad litus illud exoptatus olim uindex et liberator appuleras, obuius sese maiestati tuae triumphus effundit, exultantesque gaudio Britanni cum coniugibus ac liberis obtulerunt, non te ipsum modo, quem ut caelo delapsum intuebantur, sed etiam nauis illius quae tuum numen aduexerat, uela remigiaque uenerantes, paratique te ingredientem stratis sentire corporibus. Nec mirum si tanto gaudio ferebantur post tot annorum miserrimam captiuitatem, post uiolatas coniuges, post liberorum turpe seruitium tandem liberi tandemque Romani, tandem uera imperii luce recreati. Siquidem praeter illam clementiae uestrae pietatisque famam, quae communi gentium uoce celebratur, in ipso, Caesar, tuo uultu uidebant omnium signa uirtutum: in fronte grauitatis, in oculis lenitatis, in rubore uerecundiae, in sermone iustitiae" (*Panegyrici Latini*, VIII. 19. 1-3). Quoted and translated in *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 21, by C.E.V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 140, 552.

34. *R.I.C.* 5.2, no. 34. Discussed in Nixon and Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors*, p. 140, n. 71. See also MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, p. 29, and plate 9.

35. For extensive examples of the terrifying splendor of a late emperor's visage, see Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum gestarum libri*, ed. Victor

Constantius' clemency toward the not altogether guiltless inhabitants of London could certainly be cause for rejoicing; as we have seen, even in the earlier empire political rivals could be ritually proscribed, so that they might suffer the double indignity of condemnation to Hades and assassination at the hands of their own troops. Under the Dominate, attitudes toward enemies—foreign and domestic—become exacerbated; the tone increases in moral and one might say metaphysical pitch over that which was implicit in the dispatches of Probus, above; this heightening of pitch is evident in the following remarks by Ammianus Marcellinus regarding the hapless king of the Alamanni, Chonodomar. It is noteworthy, though, that Ammianus reserves no such contempt for the king's companions, who, in an interesting echo of Tacitus, prefer not to outlive their leader:

> On seeing [the pursuing cohort, the king] was driven to the utmost fear and surrendered of his own accord, coming out alone; and his attendants, two hundred in number, with three of his closest friends, thinking it a disgrace to survive their king, or not to die for their king if an emergency required it, gave themselves up to be made prisoners. And as the savages are by nature humble in adversity and overbearing in success, subservient as he now was to another's will he was dragged along pale and abashed, tongue-tied by the consciousness of his crimes—how vastly different from the man who, after savage and woeful outrages, trampled upon the ashes of Gaul and threatened many dire deeds.[36]

These considerations are not unique to fourth-century Roman ideology: the instigator of a rebellion often receives a disproportionate share of odium; and that odium may be crouched, as here, in terms of ironic comparison with his high ambitions and former

Gardthausen (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1967): 18. 2, 17; 21. 13, 15; 27. 2, 6; 27. 5, 3; 28. 5, 3; 29. 5, 15; and 31. 10, 9. Also, Ramsay MacMullen, "Some Pictures in Ammianus Marcellinus," *Art Bulletin* 46 (1964), 435-55.

36. Constantius and Julian, 16. 12, 60-61. Trans. John C. Rolfe, Loeb series (London: Heinemann, 1952), I, 297-99. "Quibus uisis, conpulsus ad ultimos metus ultro se dedit solus egressus comitesque eius ducenti numero et tres amici iunctissimi, flagitium arbitrati post regem uiuere, uel pro rege non mori, si ita tulerit casus, tradidere se uinciendos. Utque natiuo more sunt barbari humiles in aduersis disparesque in secundis, seruus alienae uoluntatis trahebatur pallore confusus claudente noxarum conscientia linguam, immensum quantum ab eo differens qui post feros lugubresque terrores cineribus Galliarum insultans multa minabatur et saeua," ed. Gardthausen, 2, 109.

power. And indeed, it does seem as if Ammianus has deliberately singled out the king for censure; in a symmetrical guarantee of transcendence to an ideal *imperator*, who in his majesty embodies all virtue, the leader who opposes him must necessarily contain all vice. Chonodomar's attendants and friends, on the other hand, are presented as loyal and courageous, in contrast to their king; they seem not to be implicated in treachery, but were rather merely misled by a once charismatic and now pathetic figure.

By specifically identifying the enemy leader as the sole culpable criminal, the conquering emperor may in his clemency excuse the misguided citizens of this or that city defeated in its revolt. The city, in gratitude, may in turn both accept the emperor's mercy and direct all its guilty fury against its former leader. In this circumstance it is even possible for the emperor (or, as the century progresses, his representative) to assume a more judiciously objective role as investigative magistrate. Ammianus gives the following account of Emperor Julian sending his general Agilo to Aquileia in 361; the city had been rebelling under a certain Nigrinus and others in support of Constantius II. After Agilo had given the rebels a solemn oath that Constantius was dead and that Julian was now the true emperor, the city surrendered:

> When this was heard, the gates were opened, and after their long torment all poured forth and gladly met the peace-making general. Trying to excuse themselves, they presented Nigrinus as the author of the whole outrage, along with a few others, asking that by the execution of these men the crime of treason and the woes of their city might be expiated. Finally, a few days later, after the affair had been more thoroughly investigated before Mamertinus, the praetorian prefect, then sitting in judgement, Nigrinus as the chief instigator of the war was burned alive. But after him Romulus and Sabostius, senators of Aquileia, being convicted as having sown the seeds of discord without regard to its dangerous consequences, died by the executioner's sword. All the rest, whom compulsion, rather than inclination, had driven to this mad strife, escaped unpunished. For so the emperor, naturally mild and merciful, had decided on grounds of justice.[37]

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37. *Rerum*, 21. 12, 19. Trans. Rolf, I. "His auditis ex diuturno angore portis reclusis omnes effusi suscepere laeti pacificum ducem, seque purgantes Nigrinum totius furoris auctorem paucosque alios obtulerunt, eorum supplicio laesae crimina maiestatis et urbis aerumnas expiari poscentes. Paucis denique post diebus exploratius spectato negotio, Mamertino tum iudi-

Particularly noteworthy is the citizens' prayer for expiation from treason, both the greatest of all crimes and the self-acknowledged source of the city's misery. In consequence, but only after the observation of due process, Nigrinus received the most horrifying of punishments; his confederates, however, if that is indeed what they were, are almost excused for not having considered the consequences of their actions. They are given a comparatively honorable and less painful death as befitting Roman citizens. Ammianus' last statement, a summation almost having the quality of a legal dictum in itself, reconciles the irreconcilable: it would be far more logical to judge first, and then choose to be merciful. Julian, in a deific way, has demonstrated his natural clemency precisely, and purely, within the strict bounds of absolute equity.

In similar ways, the notion that the emperor's *adventus* could restore health to a languishing people takes on a spiritual dimension, as if the ruler's powers might exceed even those of the gods. In one illustrative incident, occurring at Vienne in 355, Ammianus recounts what must have been a commonplace event: the dramatic proclamation of Julian as the great hope of civic redemption, culminating in his dedication to restore the customary Roman religion:

> When he reached Vienne and entered the city, all ages and ranks flocked together to receive him with honor, as a man both longed for and efficient; and when they saw him afar off, the whole populace with the immediate neighborhood saluted him as a commander gracious and fortunate, and marched ahead of him with a chorus of praise, the more eagerly beholding royal pomp in a legitimate prince. And in his coming they placed the redress of their common disasters, thinking that some helpful spirit had shone upon their desperate condition. Then an old woman, who had lost her sight, on inquiring who had entered and learning that it was the Caesar Julian, cried out that he would repair the temples of the gods.[38]

cante praefecto praetorio, Nigrinus ut acerrimus belli instinctor exustus est uiuus. Romulus uero post eum et Sabostius curiales conuicti sine respectu periculi in studia saeuiisse discordiarum, poenali consumpti sunt ferro. Residui omnes abierunt innoxii, quos ad certaminum rabiem necessitas egerat, non uoluntas. Id enim aequitate pensata statuerat placabilis imperator et clemens," ed. Gardthausen, 2, 252.

38. 15.8, 21-22, trans. Rolfe, I, 174-75; "Cumque Viennam uenisset, ingredientem optatum quidem et impetrabilem honorifice susceptura omnis aetas concurrebat et dignitas, proculque uisum plebs uniuersa cum uicinitate finitima, imperatorem clementem appellans et faustum, praeuia con-

Some details are familiar : there is the same longing for deliverance ; there is the same expectation of justice ; and there is the same acquiescence to the legitimate powers of the emperor in deciding clemency ; the emphasis on restoring health has shifted somewhat, in that the blind woman, rather than expecting to be cured personally, predicts that, at the nod of the emperor, the gods themselves would return.

The Imperial *adventus*

To sum up the foregoing discussion, the Roman imperial *adventus* ceremony retains a number of defining characteristics over the three centuries of our study : the arriving emperor exemplifies legitimate authority ; he is, by an act of his majesty alone, generous and clement ; because his enemies have threatened Roman freedoms, he has come to restore them, and thus liberate those held in slavery ; and finally, those enemies will suffer appropriate punishment. By the fourth century, each of these qualities has, at some sacrifice of integrity, become exaggerated : legitimate authority rises as much from the emperor's discretion as from the dictates of law ; clemency has become almost theatrical in its broad gestures ; freedom and health have become the exercise of transcendent will, a will to return to the sacred rule of Rome ; and the state's enemies have become fewer but more culpable.

The Harrowing of Hell in Late Antiquity

Given the evidence of figures like Melito of Sardis quoted above, it can be determined that there was a belief circulating among Christians from the end of the second century that Christ had harrowed hell, in the sense of conquering it and freeing its inhabitants. Other references occur in the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Epistle of the Apostles*, and the *Gospel of Peter* among the apocrypha. As was indicated earlier, the Harrowing section of the *Evangelium Nicodemi* may date from the sixth century. Moreover, if we move from the apocrypha to homiletic material for examples, there are testi-

sonis laudibus celebrabat, auidius pompam regiam in principe legitimo cernens : communiumque remedium aerumnarum in eius locabat aduentu, salutarem quendam genium adfulsisse conclamatis negotiis arbitrata. Tunc anus quaedam orba luminibus cum percontando quinam esset ingressus, Iulianum Caesarum conperisset, exclamauit hunc deorum templa reparaturum." ed. Gardthausen, 1. 67-8.

monies that, if not actually fourth century, are still within the cultural influence of the Dominate, and it is to these testimonies that we now turn.

Eusebius Alexandrinus

There is considerable evidence that the Harrowing myth excited the popular imagination throughout the Middle East. What may be its earliest surviving depiction can be found on a Cappadocian wall-painting dating from the late sixth or early seventh centuries.[39] Another early exemplar is a seventh-century Syrian icon.[40] There is indeed evidence that Syrian bishops played an influential role at synods that discussed the Harrowing, and this has led a number of scholars to postulate a Syrian connection.[41] Unfortunately, neither a Syrian—nor Egyptian—origin can be determined for a certain Eusebius Alexandrinus, about whom little is known except that he flourished in the fourth or fifth century. Eusebius' total work, some twenty-one sermons, survives intact; individual sermons can be found in collections under the names of Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, and John Damascene. Like the works of John Chrysostom and many other Greek homilists, the sermons of Eusebius Alexandrinus were known and translated in the West, certainly in the time of Caesarius of Arles, and probably before. A sermon of his can be found in the Visigothic liturgy

39. In the monastic church of Saint John the Baptist, Çavuşşin. See the compelling series of studies by Nicole Thierry: (with Michel Thierry) *Nouvelles églises rupestres de Cappadoce. Région du Hasan Dagi* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1963), pp. 150, 168-69; *Haut moyen-âge en Cappadoce. Les églises de la région de Çavuşin* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1983), I, 83-4, fig. 32, pl. 24; "L'illustration des apocryphes dans les églises de Cappadoce," *Apocrypha* 2 (1991), 224-28, illust. 11; "Le thème de la descente du Christ aux Enfers en Cappadoce," *Deltion tes Christianikes Archaiologikes Hetaireias* 4:17 (1993-94), 59-66. I am grateful to Dr. Rémi Gounelle for this information.

40. Elisabetta Lucchesi-Palli, "Der syrish-palästinensische Darstellungstypus der Höllenfahrt Christi," *Römische Quartalschrift* 57 (1962), 250-67.

41. On the whole issue of a possible Syrian association to the descent myth, see A. F. J. Klijn's notes to *The Acts of Thomas* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962), pp. 181-3 and especially 189-90, and Rémi Gounelle, "Le frémissement des portiers de l'Enfer à la vue du Christ: *Jb* 38, 17b et trois symboles de foi des années 359-360" in *Le Livre de Job chez les Pères*, Cahiers de Biblia Patristica (Strasbourg: Centre d'analyse et de documentation patristiques, 1996), pp. 179-80.

of the seventh century,[42] and an Easter sermon is included in the homiliary of Agimund, from the early ninth century.[43]

There are two Eusebian Easter sermons, the ninth, *De diabolo et orco*, and the tenth, *In sancta et magna Parasceve, et sancta passione Domini*, that evince several key concepts concerning the Harrowing.[44] These two sermons in particular demonstrate a strong influence of the *adventus* ceremony on the myth of the Harrowing of Hell, already implicit in Melito of Sardis, as we have seen. Both sermons appear in Latin from the fifth or sixth century, and it is to these Latin versions that we turn. One fairly close analogue to the two Alexandrian sermons combined exists, under the title *Sermo de confusione Diaboli*; it was first edited by E.K. Rand in 1904 from what he thought was a unique version of the tenth century;[45] Dr. Izydorczyk has since identified two further copies, one of the eleventh and the other of the eleventh/twelfth centuries, suggesting wider popularity.[46] Using this "Sermo" as a point of departure, I would like to examine three passages found in Alexandrinus which will aid in our investigation. These and other segments compare with similar passages in the Latin work of a mysterious figure identified as "Eusebius," a Western homilist who seems to have been broadly influenced by Eusebius Alexandrinus. The purpose is twofold: to define more coherently some of the main attributes of the Harrowing tradition, and to establish relevant texts that can be dated with more certainty to Late Antiquity.

The Western Eusebius evinces several Gaulic traits, and his modern editor has for that reason retained a traditional appellation,

42. G. Morin, "Sermo de dominicae observatione: Une ancienne adaptation latine d'un sermon attribué à Eusèbe d'Alexandrie," *Revue bénédictine* 24 (1907), 530-4.
43. J. Leroy and Fr. Glorie, "Eusèbe d'Alexandrie, source d'Eusèbe de Gaule," *Sacris Erudiri* 19 (1969), 33-70, esp. 49-50, 67-70.
44. *PG* 86, cols. 383-406; see also *Oratio de adventu et annuntiatione Joannis (Baptistae) apud inferos,* cols. 509-526, attributed to Eusebius of Emesa. Difficulties in attribution have been described by F. Nau, "Notes sur diverses homélies pseudépigraphiques, sur les œuvres attribuées à Eusèbe d'Alexandrie et sur un nouveau manuscrit de la chaîne *Contra Severianos*," *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* 13 (1908), 406-435.
45. "Sermo de Confusione Diaboli," *Modern Philology* 2 (1904), 261-78. Reprinted, with further notes, by O. Hey, "Eine Predigt über Christi Höllenfahrt," *Archiv für lateinische Lexicographie und Grammatik* 14 (1906), 253-68.
46. Zbigniew Izydorczyk, "Two Newly Identified Manuscripts of the *Sermo de Confusione Diaboli*," *Scriptorium* 43 (1989), 253-55.

"Gallicanus," so as to distinguish him from either Eusebius Alexandrinus or Eusebius of Emesa.[47] He may have written as early as the fifth century.[48] There are three interrelated Easter sermons attributed to Gallicanus, the earliest manuscripts of which date from the seventh century. Of the three, the most important is sermon number eight, *Exsulta caelum, et laetare terra.*[49] Though found in only two of the nearly five hundred manuscripts containing Gallican material, Sermo 8 contains passages that will later appear in one of the most influential Harrowing sermons of the entire medieval period, *De Pascha II* (inc. *Passionem vel resurrectionem*), attributed to Augustine and numbered 160 in the appendix to his works.[50] The Pseudo-Augustinian sermon appears to be closely connected with Pseudo-Eusebius Gallicanus *Sermon 8*, and some passages most resemble the Harrowing text in the *Evangelium Nicodemi* itself.[51] By all accounts, the *Passionem* was enormously popular; it is found in the homiliaries of Alan of Farfa and Egin of Verona, in those of Ottobeuren and Toledo, in Troyes MS 853, and almost certainly in Biblioteca capitolare c. 105.[52] It is the source

47. Eusebius 'Gallicanus,' *Collectio Homiliarum*, ed. J. Leroy and F. Glorie, *CCSL* 101 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1970).

48. For arguments on this score, see Élie Griffe, "Les sermons de Fauste de Riez. La 'Collectio Gallicana' du Pseudo-Eusèbe," *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* [Toulouse] 61 (1960), 27-38; and A. Souter, "Observations on the Pseudo-Eusebian collection of Gallican sermons," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 41 (1940), 47-57.

49. Eusebius [Ps-Caesariensis], "Sermo 8. De Resurrectione Domini," in Eusebius 'Gallicanus,' *Sermones Extravagantes*, ed. F. Glorie, *CCSL* 101B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), pp. 881-6.

50. Ps-Augustinus, "*Sermo CLX. De Pascha*, II," in *PL* 19, cols. 2059-2061.

51. This sermon may justly be called the stumbling-block of Harrowing studies; as will be made clear, it was placed in the sermon collections of a large number of patristic writers, and all of the manuscripts may never be identified. It is the subject of one recent dissertation, D. Ozimic, *Der Pseudoaustinische Sermo CLX. Hieronymus als sein vermutlicher Verfasser, seine dogmen\geschichtliche Einordnung und seine Bedeutung für das österliche Canticum triumphale "Cum rex gloriae"* (Graz: Verlag für die Technische Universität Graz [Dissertationen der Universität Graz, 47], 1979). For a brief discussion, see Jackson J. Campbell, "To Hell and Back: Latin Tradition and Literary Use of the *Descensus ad Inferos* in Old English," *Viator*, 13 (1982), 107-58, especially 131-3.

52. For a general discussion of homiliaries in the early medieval period, see Giuseppe Löw, "Il più antico sermonario di San Pietro in Vaticano," *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 19 (1942), 143-83; Jean Leclerq, "Tables pour l'inventaire des homiliaires manuscrits," *Scriptorium* 2 (1948), 195-214; Reginald Grégoire, "L'Homiliaire de Farfa," in *Les homiliaires du*

for Blickling Homily number seven, the Old English Easter sermon in Junius 121, and—directly or indirectly—the eighth-century *Book of Cerne*.[53] A section of it, the Easter *Canticum triumphale*, appears in a large number of rites beginning in the ninth century. The sermon has never been dated with any confidence, though Alan of Farfa's collection belongs to the eighth century.

The two other Easter sermons in the Eusebian canon, XII and XII-A, both beginning with the incipit *Exsulta caelum et in laetitia*, contain, with some differences between them, material similar to, and in some cases identical to that in sermon eight.[54] Both XII and XII-A achieved a great deal of popularity in their own right. Ninety-four manuscripts contain one or the other, and most of these contain both; the earliest of these dates from the seventh century. They also appear in the homiliaries of Agimund, and of Egin of Verona, as well as in Troyes 853. And, predictably, both sermons can be found bearing such names as Augustine, Jerome, Faustus of Riez, Caesarius of Arles, Fulgentius, and Martin of Leon, though most often they are ascribed to Eusebius. All of these sermons exhibit a vigorous, dramatic style with extensive dialogue, suggesting that the distinction in genre between narrative literature on one side and homilies on the other might be an arbitrary and perhaps artificial one.

Adventus Christi: Three Aspects

The three passages chosen from Alexandrinus and Gallicanus reflect themes developed in the earlier sections on Roman politi-

moyen âge. Inventaire et analyse des manuscrits, Rerum ecclesiasticarum documenta, series maior. Fontes, VI (Rome: Herder, 1966), pp. 1-21; R. Etaix, "Un homiliaire ancien dans le MS. LII de la bibliothèque capitulaire de Vérone," *Revue bénédictine* 73 (1963), 289-306; and Edoardo Hosp, C.SS.R., "Il sermonario di Alano di Farfa," *Ephemerides liturgicae* N.S. 10 and 11, vols. 50 and 51 (1936/37), 375-83; 210-41.

53. See *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. and trans. R. Morris, EETS 58, 63, 73 (1874-80), pp. 82-97; Anna Maria Luisella Fadda, "*De descensu Christi ad inferos*: Una inedita omelia anglosassone," *Studia Medievali* 13 (1972), 989-1011; *The Prayer Book of Aedeluald the Bishop, Commonly Called the Book of Cerne*, ed. A. B. Kuypers (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1902), pp. 196-98; and David Dumville, "Liturgical Drama and Panegyric Responsory from the Eighth Century," *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 23 (1972), 374-406.

54. "Homilia XII. De Pascha, I," and "Homilia XII A. De Pascha, I A," in *Collectio Homiliarum*, 141-43 and 145-50.

cal ceremony: the majesty of the emperor at his entry, the abject misery of the emperor's enemies, and the grateful salvation of the oppressed captives. In a dramatic stroke that has precedents in Roman rhetoric, the first two themes are expressed by the emperor's enemies themselves, in this case the Devil and Hell, the familiar figure of a personified city. All of these passages are characterized by an extensive interchange of challenge and reply, a comic confusion on the part of the Devil and Hell, and a buoyant sense among the just of celebration and release. At various junctures, too, there are close parallels with incidents and dialogue in both the Pseudo-Augustinian sermon and the *Evangelium Nicodemi*; when this occurs, each will be noted.

Christ's Majesty

In Alexandrinus, Christ's entry is conveyed, as it will be in practically every other Harrowing version, through the instrumentality of Vulgate Psalm 23: 7-9, a theatrical dialogue of royal welcome into the sacred city: "Levate portae capita vestra/et elevamini portae aeternales et introibit rex gloriae." The next verse, of course, is the Devil's: "Quis est rex gloriae," to which the retinue accompanying Christ responds, "Dominus fortis et potens, Dominus potens in proelio. Adtollite portas principes vestras et elevamini portas aeternales, et introibit rex gloriae." Alexandrinus now has the Devil depart from his script, in order to ask, "quasi ignorans,"

> "Who is it that you're talking about? And if he's the one, what's he want here? Why does he want to leave heaven and descend to us?"[55]

This set of questions, designed rhetorically to elicit the retinue's scriptural response, is straightforward enough, underscoring the glory of Christ the conqueror, whom even the Devil now easily recognizes. In the *Evangelium Nicodemi*, it is Hell who, having ejected Satan from his throne, pretends obtuseness, *quasi ignorans*, in reaction to this challenge and the damning testimonies of the Jewish Prophets.

55. "'Quis est hic de quo dixisti? Et si ipse est, quem querit hic? Cur voluit derelinquere caelum et discendere ad nos?'" (Rand, 16).

The Eusebian corollary provides considerable contrast. Christ's arrival before the gates of hell is heralded by great light, causing the "impia officina" to tremble, and to cry out,

> Who then is this one terrifying and shining with snowy splendor? Our tartarus has never caught one like this; never has the earth vomited one like this into our caves. He's an attacker, not a tributary; a collector, not a criminal. We see a judge, not a supplicant: he comes to rule, not to obey; to snatch away, not to remain. Why do our gate-keepers sleep, when this warrior harries our defenses? If he is indeed an accused, he won't be over us; if any crime darkens him, then he would never destroy our blackness with his splendor. If he is god, why does he come? if man, what does he pretend to? If god, what was he doing in the tomb? if man, how can he release captives? Is it that he's fought with our leader? or might it be that, entering and conquering him, he bursts into our kingdom? He was really dead, he was really defeated. Our champion had no idea how he has brought about carnage in hell. That cross, deceiving our joy, causing our ruin; because of wood we were wealthy, because of wood we are ruined! Our power, always overwhelming to humankind, dies.[56]

Gallicanus has the ministers of Hell (unlike Alexandrinus, who has Hell do so) articulate, in a long line of interrogative antitheses, a whole *mythos*, one based to a large extent on Roman political propaganda: Christ is a mighty warrior, a judge, a victor; and, following vocabulary that emerges with the Dominate, he is acting as if he were a god, but a god willing to descend from his place to effect a rescue of sinful men. His splendor in and of itself establishes his divinity, yet the minions of Hell were fooled by the deception of the cross into believing that he was merely human. This ver-

56. "'Quisnam' inquiunt 'est iste terribilis et niueo splendore coruscus? Numquam noster talem excepit tartarus; numquam in nostra cauerna talem euomuit mundus. Inuasor est iste, non debitor; exactor, non peccator. Iudicem uidemus, non supplicem: uenit iubere, non succumbere; eripere, non manere. Vbi iam iantores dormierunt, cum iste bellator claustra uexabat? Hic, si reus esset, super nos non esset; si eum aliqua delicta fuscarent, numquam nostra regna suo dissiparet fulgore. Si deus, ut quid uenit? si homo, quid praesumit? Si deus, quid in sepulcro facit? si homo, quare captiuos soluit? Numquidnam iste cum autore nostro pugnauit? aut forte aggressus et ipsum uicit, et sic ad nostra regna transcendit? Certe mortuus erat, certe illusus erat. Proeliator noster nesciuit quam hic stragem procuraret in inferno. Crux illa fallens gaudia nostra, parturiens damna nostra; per lignum ditati sumus, per lignum euertimur! Perit potestas illa semper popuilis formidata'" (*Sermon 8*, 882-883).

sion is explicit to an extreme in its use of military allusions: "invasor," "bellator," "claustra uexabat," "nostra regna suo dissiparet fulgore," "autore nostro pugnauit," "aggressus," "uicit," "ad nostra regna transcendit," "proeliator noster," and "stragem." While there is very little of this language in Alexandrinus, a similar outcry can be found in the *Evangelium Nicodemi*: there Hell's ministers describe Christ specifically as "miles et imperator, in forma serui admirabilis praeliator," almost certainly an imperial humility topos going back to Pliny and before. The demons admit, "Vici sumus a te," and subsequently catalogue his triumphs: "legiones nostras perturbas," "absolvis captivos," "in liberatem pristinam revocas," "sic intrepidus nostros fines ingressus es," all characteristics and indeed hallmarks of imperial authority. In balance, however, the *Evangelium* also emphasizes the humanity of Christ: "tam fortis homo et splendidus in majestate" (*Ev.Nic.*22.1).

Recriminations

The Alexandrinus version of the Harrowing had begun with a boasting harangue on Satan's part, exulting that he has finally brought about the death of Christ; he awaits this, his next prize, the man's captured soul, with joy. He found no danger in attempting to win so great a trophy, and in fact he had recalled the loss of Lazarus, not with dread, but with emotions both vengeful and expectant, since he will now enslave a victim commensurate to his own greatness. When Christ finally arrives, however, accompanied by *virtutes* as heralds and honor-guards, the personified Hell berates Satan for his pride:

> Three-headed and Beelzebub, mockery of the saints, coward, full of envy, didn't I tell you not to fight with him? Now everything I predicted is coming your way, and what are you going to do, you wretch? Why didn't you obey me? And now he comes looking for you, and because of you I'm to be enslaved. If you can, you wretch, fight him; I can't help you.[57]

The congregation would certainly appreciate the sniveling cowardice that Hell himself exhibits, his ridiculous exhortations to the

57. "'Tricapite et Beelzebub, derisio sanctorum, infortis, inuide, non tibi dixi ne pugnes cum eo? Ecce nunc quae praedixi aduenerunt tibi, et quid facies miser? Quare non oboedisti uerbis meis? Et nunc uenit et querit te, et propter te captiuus fio. Et si potes, miser, pugna cum eo. Ego enim te adiuuare non possum'" (Rand, 16).

Devil to fight, and the chaotic state of the Underworld. Moreover, there is this underlying satisfaction: the enemy fully—and not reluctantly—proclaims the superior authority of the victorious Christ.[58] The short, breathless series of rhetorical questions requires eloquence in its delivery. Indeed, even though such emotional outbursts were preserved and disseminated in written form, there is every indication that in both the East and West these homilies obtained their appeal as powerful public addresses; the occasion of their copying may have simply been to make them available for recitation at special feasts, and often for insertion into the liturgy.

A similar passage containing recriminations occurs in Eusebius Gallicanus, in a considerably expanded form, anticipating all of the implications of the defeat the diabolic powers are about to experience:

> "O our prince, isn't this the one, about whose coming death you have always applauded? he's the one, in whose cross you've believed all the world will be subjected to you? he's the one, in whose ruin, you assured us so many spoils? What have you done?
>
> "Look how he has lit all the darkness with his splendor, and your prisons smashed, freed the captives, untied the bound: turned their sorrow to joy. Those who groaned under our tortures insult us as they sense their freedom; and not only have they ceased to fear us any more, they even threaten us. Never before have the dead had so much pride, never have captives been so happy!
>
> "What did you want to bring in here: at whose arrival all are restored to happiness, who before were miserable? No usual groan is heard, no moan sounds.
>
> "O our prince: all that wealth that you first acquired through the loss of paradise, now you've lost through the cross. All your happiness is gone: your happiness has changed to sorrow. In

58. This rhetorical device appears infrequently in the panegyrics, largely because the usual practice was to slaughter enemies and have their leaders die ignominiously. In Pacatus' "Panegyric of Theodosius," however, the orator has Maximus' defeated, dying soldiers seeking secluded woods and streams, to speak out final compliments and maledictions: ". . . there they poured out their last breath in admiration for your [Theodosius] name and denunciation of their own leader [Maximus]" (". . . illic postremum spiritum in admiratione nominis tui et sui ducis detestatione fundebant") 36.2, in Nixon and Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors*, pp. 502, 667.

> hanging Christ from the cross, you have not known what loss you've prepared for hell. Couldn't you foresee that you were killing the one who would destroy your reign? Here's the reason: you wanted him to be guilty. In whom you knew there was no evil; why did you bring him to our fatherland? You have captured this free man and you have lost all the slaves!"[59]

In comparison with material found in Alexandrinus, Gallicanus elaborates the theme in a number of extremely specific ways, as signaled by the words "spolia" and "captiuos ejecit." In the Alexandrinus, the word "captivus" occurs only once, in the quoted passage, in which Hell has become imprisoned; in Gallicanus, it occurs six times, in every case referring to the enslaved Patriarchs and Prophets. To be sure, Alexandrinus has preceded the passage quoted above with a deliberately martial allusion: the *virtues* accompanying Christ explain to Hell, "Wishing to pursue the enemy, he descended to bind and to subject that enemy to you, to scatter his soldiers, and to assemble the others."[60] In contrast, Gallicanus' Christ is depicted more concretely and specifically as a conquering liberator, manifesting himself in terms of a legitimate *imperium* and of the recovery of lost subjects. Hence the ironically symmetrical references to the Devil as a "princeps," to the depths of

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59. "'O princeps noster: hicne est ille, de cuius tibi semper futura morte plaudebas? ipse est, in cuius cruce omnem mundum tibi subiugandum esse credebas? ipse est, in cuius exitu nobis tanta spolia promittebas? Quid est, quod egisti? quid est, quod facere uoluisti? "Ecce iam totas tenebras suo ipse splendore fugauit, et omnes tuos carceres fregit, captiuos eiecit, ligatos soluit: luctus eorum in gaudia commutauit. Ecce ipsi, qui sub nostris solebant suspirare tormentis, insultant nobis de perceptione salutis; et non solum iam nihil uerentur, insuper et minantur. Numquam hic ita superbierant mortui, neque aliquando sic poterant laeti esse captiui! "Vt quid hic istum adducere uoluisti: quo ueniente omnes laetitiae restituti sunt qui ante fuerant desperati? Nullus hic iam solitus eorum mugitus auditur, nullus resonat gemitus. "O princeps noster: illas tuas diuitias, quas primo acquisieras per paradisi amissionem, nunc perdidisti per crucem. Perit omnis laetitia tua: in luctum conuersa sunt gaudia tua. Dum tu Christum suspendis in ligno, ignoras quanta damna sustineas in inferno. Praeuidere non poteras, quia euersorem regni tui in mortem sine reatu aliquo perducebas? Attenderes causam: requireres culpam. In quo nihil mali cognoueras: quare ad nostram patriam perducebas? Istum liberum adduxisti et totos obnoxios perdidisti!'" (*Sermon 8*, 883-884).

60. "'Uolens inimicum persequere descendit ligare et tradere eum tibi, et milites suos excutere et conuocare eos'" (Rand, 16). I am grateful to my colleague Ms. Charlayne Allan of the University of California, Davis, for help with this passage.

hell as a "patria," and to the treasonous crime of attempting to enslave a free man. In the *Evangelium Nicodemi*, "captivus" and "spolia" do appear, but the former only twice and the latter just once; obviously, while the theme of conquest figures in the *Evangelium*, it is but one of many.

Acclamations

The third aspect fits in well with the other two. In it the souls of the just welcome Christ, often mixing biblical statements of praise with classical formulations. First, the corresponding passage in Alexandrinus:

> First David struck his cythar and said, "Come, let us exult in the Lord; because our king, fighting for us, was victorious." And everyone answered: "Everyone clap your hands, because our king, fighting for us, was victorious." And another prophet said, "Let heaven be glad, and let the earth rejoice, because our king, fighting for us, was victorious."[61]

E.K. Rand suggests an "impromptu liturgy" for this passage, and cites Judith 5:16 as a possible antecedent: "deus eorum pugnavit pro eis et vicit." Clearly David's acclamation relates generically as well, though, with the popular outbursts found in the panegyrics. The passage shows the ease with which a commonplace Latin rhetorical figure, the *conversio* or antistrophe, in which the last element is repeated, combines neatly with the biblical litany.

The Gallicanus counterpart is, as might be expected, more extensive, and also more concretely legal, militaristic, and ceremonial: this sermon utilizes, in fact, the customary phase found in many imperial *adventus* ceremonies, "Advenisti":

> Immediately the vast numbers of the saints who had been held prisoners in death, throwing themselves at the knees of their liberator, begged with tearful supplications, saying, "You have arrived, ransomer of the world; you have arrived, for whom we in desire daily hoped; you have arrived, whose coming the law

61. "Primus Dauid percutiebat cytharam et dicebat: '*uenite exultemus Domino* et reliqua; quia rex noster pugnans pro nobis uicit. Et omnes responderunt: *Omnes gentes plaudite manibus* et reliqua; quia rex noster pugnans pro nobis uicit.' Et alius propheta dicebat: '*Letentur caeli et exultet terra*, quia rex noster pugnans pro nobis uicit'" (Rand, 17).

> and the prophets announced; you have arrived, pardoning sinners in the world, still living in flesh: rescue the dead and captive in hell."[62]

The scene has all the characteristics of the ritual *adoratio*/*proskynesis*, whereby, as we have seen, the supplicants throw themselves at the feet of their liberator and beg for forgiveness. Given the specific circumstances of an arrival to the nether world, it is quite possible that these words consciously echo Anchises' greeting, *Venisti*, welcoming their savior. The deep cultural consequence of this acclamation is supported by the fact that it is found almost word-for-word in the Pseudo-Augustinian sermon, with this further extension:

> "You come after long tears, deliver us, you who alone suffered for us. Founder of the heavens, you deigned to enter into the depths; our sighs called for you, our great laments begged for you, hope in despair and consolation in torment. In your coming [*adventu*] our chains fell, night fled. Life arriving death died; torturers and assailants no longer threaten. The damned take up supplications [*vota*]; the Creator rules [*imperiat*], not an invader [*invasor*]. Chains bind the tyrant; our torturer is tortured. Rescue, Ransomer of the world, the dead and captive in hell."[63]

The *Evangelium Nicodemi*, too, contains a similar passage

> "You have come [*Advenisti*], Ransomer of the world; that which you foretold through the law and your prophets, you have accomplished. You have ransomed the living through your cross, and through your death on the cross you have descended to us,

62. "Ecce subito innumerabiles sanctorum populi qui tenebantur in morte captiui, saluatoris sui genibus abuoluti, lacrimabili cum obsecratione deposcunt, dicentes: 'Aduenisti, redemptor mundi; aduenisti, quem desiderantes quotidie sperabamus; aduenisti, quem nobis uenturum lex nuntiauerat et prophetae; aduenisti, donans in carne uiuis indulgentiam peccatoribus mundi: solue defunctos et captiuos inferni'" (*Sermon 8*, 884).
63. "'Venisti post longas lacrymas, eripe solus qui passus es pro nobis. Caeli conditor, ad inferos intrare deignatus es; te enim nostra vocabant suspiria, te larga requirebant lamenta; unde spes desperatis, unde consolatio in tormentis. In adventu tuo catena nostra cecidit, nox effugit. Vita veniente mors moritur, nec tortor instat, nec percussor. Damnati vota capiunt; Creator imperiat, non invasor. In tyranno catena innectitur; et tortor noster poena torquetur. Solve, Redemptor mundi, defunctos et captivos inferni'" (*Sermo CLX. De Pascha*, II, 3 [*PL* 19, col. 2061]).

> that you might rescue us from the depths and from death through your majesty."[64]

As remarkable as are the similarities, the subtle differences among the three accounts are particularly notable: the straightforward repetition in the Gallicanus has become an opportunity for the author of the Pseudo-Augustinian sermon both to emphasize the reversed fortunes in store for the damned, and to celebrate the opposite fate awaiting the powers of darkness. The sermon, too, seems deliberately to create echoes of classical rhythmic prose: "te enim nostra vocabant suspiria, te larga requirebant lamenta; unde spes desperatis, unde consolatio in tormentis." The *Evangelium*, on the other hand, focuses on mercy and equity; the cross, as the symbol of both shame and triumph, is acknowledged the instrument by which redemption occurs. While this is to a degree a departure from the usually glorious terminology associated with the *adventus*, nevertheless salvation occurs through Christ's majesty. Moreover, the phrase "Redemptor mundi," common to all three passages, may be compared fruitfully to the appellation "Restitutor orbis" so typical of imperial ambitions; some manuscripts of pseudo-Augustine, in fact, use *restitui* for *solue* in the last line.[65]

In the last three works, the acclamation concludes with a request on the part of the saints, a request that illustrates the various themes that each version of the Harrowing might emphasize. In both Gallicanus and Pseudo-Augustine, the saints ask Christ to plant his military standard, called a *signum*, in the newly conquered territory:

> "You have descended for us to the depths, do not abandon us when you return to the heights. You have placed the inscription of glory in the ages, plant the standard of victory in hell."[66]

This is not a vague symbolic allusion, but a reference rather to a specific act of conquest and victory; in Roman campaigning, the

64. "'Aduenist redemptor mundi; sicut per legem et prophetas tuos predixisti, factis adimplesti. Redemisti uiuos per crucem tuam et per mortem crucis ad nos descendisti, ut eriperes nos ab inferis et morte per maiestatem tuam'" (XXIV, 1, in Kim ed., p. 45).
65. In the textual note to line 106 in Glorie ed., *Sermon 8*, p. 884.
66. "'Descendisti pro nobis ad inferos, noli nobis deesse cum fueris reuersurus ad superos. Posuisti titulum gloriae in saeculo, pone signum uictoriae in inferno!'" (*Sermon 8*, 884; *Sermo CLX. De Pascha*, II, 3, col. 2061).

successful reduction of a city was signaled by planting a standard on its walls. Josephus describes a conquest as communicated in this way, and Vegetius calls the standard the necessary means by which the army is led.[67] According to these versions of the Harrowing, the *titulum*, a public inscription whereby the emperor officially commemorated major events, has been appropriately placed in the ages (the Pseudo-Augustinian sermon usually has "in heaven"). But, in contrast, a more dramatic indication of victory was needed for hell: the physical display of a battle-standard. In this context, it is almost certainly Christ's cross, though interestingly, the fact is not noted. Instead, the purpose seems to treat the act as no surer indication of the eternal, military subjugation of Hell; further, that the inhabitants of that city have specifically and voluntarily requested that they be rescued will now supply a compelling legitimacy.

Again, the *Evangelium Nicodemi* tends to emphasize both the mythic act of cosmic balance that the Harrowing represents, and the very human sacrifice of Christ, through the stark reality of the cross:

> "Lord, as you placed the inscription of your glory in heaven and as you erected the inscription of redemption, your cross, on earth, place, Lord, the standard of the victory of your cross in hell, that death may have no more dominion."[68]

Here *titulum* and *signum* have been conflated and perhaps even confused: the stress has shifted from a purely military action to just one element in a tripartite commemoration of Christ's entire accomplishment: glory in heaven, redemption on earth, and victory in hell. The author is clear, as he has been before, that events in hell are a continuation and completion of what has occurred on earth, and perfected in heaven; and it is on earth and in hell that the cross is both the true *titulum* and the true *signum*.

67. Josephus, *De bello Judaico*, VI, 403. Vegetius, *De re militari*, III, 5. See Charles Renel, *Cultes militaires de Rome: Les enseignes* (Lyon: A. Rey, 1903), especially pp. 20-29.

68. "'Domine, sicut posuisti titulum gloriae tuae in caelo et erexisti titulum redemptionis crucem tuam in terris, pone, Domine, in inferno signum uictoriae crucis tuae, ne mors dominetur amplius'" (XXIV, 1, in Kim ed., p. 45).

Conclusion

This study has sought to define a particular instance of metaphorical transference, and beyond that to contribute to the broader issues of sacred vocabulary in its creation, and the means by which transcendence is captured in the imagination: in this case, the appropriation of Roman imperial political language and gesture to a mythically religious context. Specifically, it shows the means by which the ever-present realities of power, slavery, and freedom in the Late Antique world, as embodied in the physical act of the emperor's entry into a city, could be transferred to a narrative that was both comprehensible and compelling. Roman propagandists, and beyond them, Roman culture itself, generated motifs, particularly during the Dominate, defining the emperor as liberator, as descending from heaven, as redeemer of captives, as restorer to the light of life, as one for whom the gates of rebellious cities opened. Christian scripture, already imbued with soterilogical notions of the imminent *adventus Christi*, could easily be accommodated to verify this transformation. Once the myth of the Harrowing had been established, moreover, the transference might even be reversed: a sixth-century Egyptian papyrus describes subjects as awaiting their governor with the same anticipation with which the damned souls in hell waited for Christ.[69] And later emperors certainly felt no qualms about presenting themselves as new Christs, yet again defeating the powers of darkness.[70]

As to proposing a chronology for these works, it might be imagined that the cessation of Roman rule in the West might form a reasonable *terminus ad quem*; but the conservative nature of political and religious language and the deliberate continuation of Roman ceremony by Germanic rulers[71] both make this problematic. Nevertheless, a fifth-century date for the Gallicanus and corresponding passages in the Pseudo-Augustinian sermon is quite probable; there, Roman military themes are so marked and so specific as to evince a living, rather than nostalgic, symbolic context.

69. For example, see Ulrich Wilcken, "Papyrus-Urkunden (XVII. P. Aphrod. Cairo)," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwante Gebiete*, 5 (1913), 283ff.
70. See P. J. Nordhagen, "The 'Harrowing of Hell' as imperial iconography. A note on its earliest use," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 75 (1982), 345ff.
71. See McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, on Theoderic, pp. 270-75; and Sidonius Apollinarius on Prince Sigismer, *Epist. IV*, in *MGH*, A. A. VIII, pp. 70-1.

So little is known about Alexandrinus that even the suggestion of an earlier date, as might befit a less elaborate, putative Greek source for a Latin adaptation, cannot be made. On the other hand, the *Evangelium Nicodemi*, with its emphasis on theology and its broad reference to a whole spectrum of developed belief, is certainly later than the Gallicanus, which may indeed place it in the sixth century.

Through the dramatic and powerful fictions of the apocrypha, and through the immediacy of popular preaching, themes familiar to audiences of Late Antiquity were exploited and elaborated, to their edification and obvious gratification. For centuries, then, narration of the Harrowing provided a real and culturally vibrant allegory by which a people vindicated themselves, and allowed themselves access to transcendent hope.